

**Goal 1.1: Prepare for the new forms of information, new users, and new practice patterns that may be required for health sciences librarianship.**

## Findings

Major changes in health care are creating unprecedented opportunities and challenges for health sciences librarians.<sup>19</sup>

The Panel has found that new kinds of information are being required by new groups of users, often in non-traditional sites that do not have health sciences libraries.<sup>20, 21</sup> Institutionally-based and community-based physicians and other health professionals, managers and administrators, patients, and health care consumers will all require new means of access to information resources as institutions realign themselves as part of health care networks serving enrolled populations.<sup>22</sup>

Health sciences librarians have an important role in participating in the development of computer-based patient record systems and, in particular, their linkage to knowledge-based information to assure optimal decision-support for patient care. They will be called upon to do this collaboratively with other information professionals within their institutions, especially as health care institutions implement the new JCAHO standards on the Management of Information, which focuses on the spectrum of health-related information, including patient-based information, aggregate data, knowledge-based information, and comparative data.

Health services research addresses problems in organization, staffing, financing, utilization and evaluation of health care services. Clinical practice guidelines, in particular, are likely to assume an increasingly important role in federal and corporate efforts to promote quality care at affordable cost.<sup>23, 24</sup>

The panel is aware that NLM has been working to improve its products and services in the area of health services research information since 1990.<sup>25</sup> This effort has been expanded by special added appropriations from Congress<sup>26</sup> and through the creation of the National Information Center on Health Services Research and Health Care Technology. The Center's purpose is "the collection, storage, analysis, retrieval, and dissemination of information on health services research, clinical practice guidelines, and on health care technology, including the assessment of such technology."<sup>27</sup> This kind of information may become in the future equally important to health care organizations as the traditional biomedical research literature.

## Recommendations

▼ *Health sciences librarians should capitalize on the Management of Information standards of the JCAHO as an opportunity to foster partnerships with other information professionals within their institutions, and to develop collaborative strategies dealing with common information problems.*

▼ *Health sciences librarians should become familiar with information resources related to health services research, and also assume additional responsibility for managing information related to patient and consumer education.*

## Possible Implementation Steps

### *By health sciences librarians:*

Use the latest in media and telecommunications technologies so that sites without medical libraries, such as the settings of most physician-extenders (for example, nurse practitioners and physician assistants), have access to medical data, and

Assist public libraries and other public agencies to have access to patient and consumer health information.

### *By NLM:*

Provide specialized training for health sciences librarians and others at medical care institutions so they may have access to the growing body of health services research information.

## Findings

Health sciences librarians have much to contribute to the changing health care system. A common view held by the Panel is that their capabilities are often not fully understood, utilized, or challenged.

Studies of the economic value of information services and systems may be valuable in assisting employers, administrators, policy-makers, and others to understand the possible contributions of health sciences librarians. Similarly, studies of what employers want from information professionals can help assure that the capabilities of health sciences librarians are responsive to "real world" requirements.

## Recommendations

▼ *The Medical Library Association, the Association of Academic Health Sciences Library Directors, and other professional organizations should take action so that employers of health sciences librarians know the worth of the health information systems and services provided by the members of these organizations. Such actions should include studies to:*

*Determine what employers want from information professionals; and*

*Establish quantitative and qualitative measures of the value of information services for health care.*

**Goal 1.2:**  
**Match**  
**the capabilities**  
**of health**  
**sciences**  
**librarians**  
**to the**  
**needs of**  
**employers.**



## Possible Implementation Steps

### *By professional associations:*

Mount a campaign to inform employers about the considerable capabilities and evolving roles of health sciences librarians, and about the value to a health care organization of hiring better trained information professionals.